



Education Telecommunications Council

Meeting Minutes

Thursday November 10, 2016

I. Welcome and Roll-Call

The November 10, 2016 meeting of the Education Telecommunications Council was called to order by Ellen Kabat-Lensch, the ETC Chair at 9:02 A.M. This meeting was held at the Iowa Department of Education, as well as various sites through Zoom video conferencing service. The following members were present at the meeting: Jody Gray, SAI; Ken Harrison, IPTV; Galen Howsare, IASB; Ellen Kabat-Lensch, IACCT; Tom Kruse, IAICU; Sally Lindgren, AEA Boards; Erin McConnell, ISEA; Gwen Nagel, DE; Jay Peterson, DE/Libraries; Lane Plugge, AEA Boards; Cindy Swanson, ISEA; Kristin Swift, IASB; Duane Willhite, SAI.

Kenneth Colwell, IAICU; Kent Johnson, Board of Regents; and Mark White, IACCT were unable to attend.

The following guests were also present at the meeting: Ryan Wise, DE; Phil Groner, ICN; Lori Larsen, ICN; Mark Dayton, ICN; Pam Jacobs, Iowa E-Rate Coordinator; Angi Hillers, DE; Theresa Zeigler, RTC 3; Julie Thomas, RTC 6; Linda Abel, RTC 15.

Ellen Kabat-Lensch welcomed three new members to the Council. Jody Gray, representing SAI; Ken Harrison, representing IPTV; and Cindy Swanson, representing ISEA. Gwen Nagel motioned for approval of the June 17, 2016 minutes of the ETC. This motion was seconded by Kristin Swift. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Updates

1. DE Update

Gwen Nagel provided the Department of Education update. The Department of Education has been working on the development of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan for the state, as well as planning for the implementation of HF 2392. HF 2392 legislation emphasizes three things. The first area of emphasis is career and academic planning, including an enhanced and more holistic approach (district plans, school teams, career information systems). The second area of emphasis is quality CTE programs, including higher expectations; regular review and approval of all programs; better business engagement; and a modernized framework. The third area of emphasis is regional planning. Ensuring access to a diverse array of robust offerings requires institutions to work together. This will be implemented over a couple of years. How this will impact school districts is yet to be seen. Additionally, Iowa Learning Online is moving towards self-sufficiency and began charging tuition during the fall 2016 semester. The DE also had been working on the State Ed Tech Plan; after internal discussion, it was decided to wait until the ESSA plan was complete to see how this may impact planning. Nagel, as the State Ed Tech director, and a couple individuals from the AEAs are continuing to meet.

The Director of the Department of Education, Ryan Wise provided a further update on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaces No Child Left Behind. Wise mentioned that the DE is very interested in hearing from the field. If anyone from the ETC and RTCs sees stakeholder connections, they are invited to share their thoughts. The DE has just finished their most recent public input meeting, and continues to be open to more input. The first draft should be available in January, and will be shared with this group for their input at that time. The DE is aiming to submit the final plan to the U.S. Department of Education on March 6th, 2016.

2. E-Rate Update

Pam Jacobs, the State E-Rate coordinator provided the E-rate update. Jacobs mentioned that Jay Peterson is the library contact for the E-rate program, and can also serve as a resource for questions. Jacobs began with some background information for the new ETC members. The E-rate program began implementation in 1998, as a result of the Telecom Act of 1996 which passed with strong bi-partisan support. E-rate is not a grant program. When a school or library receives a funding commitment, they do not automatically receive a payment. This is one of few programs that administers funding for both public, and non-public schools as well as libraries. It is federally established, but is not a line-item in the budget so is not impacted by budget cuts. It is funded by all of us in our monthly phone bills. E-rate is one of four programs in the Universal Service program. All applicants must apply annually for funding. This is a three step process; if any step is not followed, then the funding will not be received.

Beginning in 2014 some items became newly eligible, one of these that could be promising for some districts is where they are trying to interconnect their schools, and their either is not fiber to connect the schools. This item is a self-provision, where a school could own the fiber and this would be an E-rate eligible expense under certain circumstances.

Cindy Swanson, the representative for ISEA had a question about how E-rate information is communicated to districts. Jacobs responded that the Department of Education has always had someone that works with districts and non-public schools. This assistance is available to districts at no cost. Jacobs cannot complete the paperwork for the schools, but can assist them. The AEAs also provide support to connect districts with Jacobs, as the State E-rate Coordinator. Cindy recommended that Jacobs's contact information to be sent to the communication directors for ISEA, IASB and SAI.

Jacobs shared the level of discount provided throughout the state. Category 1 includes internet, wide area networks, and fiber networks. The state average for this is about 65%, although each applicant has its own discount level. This is calculated using the free and reduced lunch eligibility percentage divided by the enrollment. Urban versus Rural is calculated using census data, which was recently changed; it had previously been determined by the county in which the district was located. Category 2 expenses include items inside the school or the library, including switches, routers, access points, and also fiber cabling inside the school. The maximum here is 85%. All of Iowa's applicants can receive Category 1 funding. AEAs can only receive Category 1 funding, but not Category 2. In 2014, the FCC determined that telephone and voice services would be de-emphasized and phased out in order to provide more funding for switches and routers and wireless access points.

Prior to today's meeting, Jacobs conducted an analysis to determine whether Iowa's districts are receiving all of the funding for which they are eligible under the E-rate program. Funding years 2014 and 2015 show that most applicants are receiving all of the funding they are entitled to receive. Some are not getting any funding to which they are entitled, and some are getting part of the funding to which they are entitled. Likely this is due to the need to follow through with all three steps of the process, and a change in personnel, or the complexity of the rules leads some to begin the process, but not complete all the steps. The disbursements do not necessarily match the commitments because this is a not a grant, so schools and libraries are approved to spend up to a certain amount, but will only be reimbursed for that which they were charged.

Funding commitments are slow this year. The deadline to apply for E-rate was one month later this year. The new portal has caused problems for both applicants and reviewers. The application for next year likely will open in February and close in late March, although this is subject to change. Many Iowan applicants will receive no discounts for voice/telephone services.

3. ICN Update

Phil Groner, the Chief Operating Officer for the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) provided an update. Groner stated that the ICN wants to ensure that lines of communication between the ETC, the RTCs and the ICN remain open. The ICN's vision is to be broadband strong. They will accomplish this by being fast, flexible and strong in how they provide broadband services to educational customers. The ICN is not only a videoconferencing network for educational users. Internet services usage surpassed videoconferencing services many years ago. The ICN will soon be completing a core upgrade. This was last completed about five years ago. The network will move to a 200 gig core. This will provide a massive amount of bandwidth for their customers. The ICN will be a fully IP network, Groner reminded the group of the June 30, 2018 sunset date for the end of MPEG being supported on the network. The ICN will be moving toward a cloud-based service and moving away from owning the physical equipment. This will lead to significant savings for the network and its users.

ICN also offers cyber security services. Many schools do not have a lot of expertise and resources to fight cyber security issues, but still may be threatened by these issues. The ICN can provide these services with cloud-based services. The largest number of attacks the ICN has seen to date have been directed towards education users because they do not have the local resources to fight these attacks.

Galen Howsare asked what cyber security services the ICN provides to school districts. Groner explained the ways the ICN has of mitigating cyber security issues for schools. The ICN is still in trial for these services, but believes that it will be available more widely next year. Further discussion regarding cyber security features were discussed.

III. Issues

1. RTC support for FY 2018

Angi Hillers informed the group that the FY18 funding allocation was approved at the June meeting. The discussion topic for today is regarding whether the ETC wishes to utilize the same calculation for how the funding allocation will be distributed to the RTCs. Or if any further information is needed prior to the ETC making this decision. Ellen Kabat-Lensch mentioned that last year, each RTC received a \$50,000 base rate, and the remainder of the allocation was distributed based upon usage data collected by the ICN. Discussion followed regarding a base rate, and how to calculate usage. Groner noted that IP usage is a flat rate service with the ICN, whereas MPEG data was billed per hour. Sally Lindgren recommended that the ETC review all data usage, but also retain a base rate. Duane Willhite mentioned that the base rate is important for the rural areas that may not have larger usage, but still have service needs.

2. Discussion of ETC and RTCs guidance on distance learning for schools

Kabat-Lensch noted that the ETC conducted a survey last spring, and a majority of respondents believed that the ETC and RTCs should explore, advocate, or provide increased bandwidth options. A majority of respondents to the survey also believe that the ETC and RTCs should demonstrate or inform schools and libraries regarding existing and new technologies. Today we wanted to discuss how the ETC can assist schools as technology is changing. Discussion followed regarding school-to-school sharing and bandwidth needs for schools.

IV. Miscellaneous

1. FY 2016 RTC Annual Report Summary

A summary of the FY 2016 RTC funding usage as reported on the Annual Reports was provided.

2. FY 2017 RTC Budget Request Summary

A summary of the FY2017 RTC budget requests was provided, as well as a comparison of this year's requests to the previous two years requests.

3. ETC and RTC Vacancies

Kabat-Lensch mentioned the two current vacancies on the ETC, and asked for any recommendations. The RTC vacancies were also reviewed, and the representatives for each appointing authority were requested to assist in identifying new members to fill the existing vacancies.

4. Library Update

Jay Peterson provided an update from the State Library. Peterson mentioned that the American Library Association (ALA) and the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) were commissioned by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requested applicants to participate in a Library E-rate Assessment and Planning (LEAP) Program. About twenty states applied, and Iowa was one of five states selected to participate. This is a two-year program trying to develop more E-rate success in Iowa. They are trying to help libraries to be better broadband advocates within their communities.

V. Adjournment

As there was no further discussion, Ellen Kabat-Lensch requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Galen Howsare motioned to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Gwen Nagel and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 10:13 A.M.